

CASE STUDY

USING PSYCHOLOGY TO EMBRACE & EXPLOIT CHANGE

UNITED BISCUITS BELIEVES THAT PEOPLE – NOT PROCESSES – DETERMINE THE BEST SOLUTIONS FOR MANAGING CHANGE.

United Biscuits (“UB”) is the leading manufacturer and marketer of biscuits in the UK and Iberia, and the second largest in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Among UB’s most popular brands in the UK are McVitie’s Jaffa Cakes, Jacob’s, Hula Hoops, Mini Cheddars and McCoy’s.



Like all major businesses, UB needs to respond effectively to the demands of a highly competitive market and to implement rapid change in order to meet the requirements of its customers – for example, major retailers such as Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury’s. Flexibility – specifically the company’s ability to constantly re-examine and refine its manufacturing and delivery systems – is crucial. But UB itself is also a customer: it has seen significant inflation in the cost of raw materials such as cocoa, flour and packaging ‘fill’. It has to ensure that its internal processes and procurement strategies are sufficiently robust to secure the best deals from its suppliers.

But UB believes that it’s not enough simply to highlight the need for change and impose new ways of working; you have to take people with you.

“fit for the purpose and sustainable”

Les Bacon, UB’s change manager for the UK, explains: *“We’re pretty good about delivering change projects on time, but what we really need to do is to help our people to understand the genuine need for change and our approach to it. Change, naturally, brings a level of upheaval and uncertainty; new processes are introduced and, in some instances, headcount is reduced. Employee engagement is crucial; you have to make sure that employees are fully aligned to new imperatives by presenting them with a cast iron case for why change is necessary and how the company – at every level – is going to work through that change. Moreover, people – not processes – determine the best solutions for managing change; our people are vital in helping the company arrive at solutions that are both fit for the purpose and sustainable.”*



Clearly engagement cannot be imposed; it has to be earned and, with a business as large as UB, effective communication of change is very important.

“We need to work with different teams in many locations, since local capability has to be able to pick up on a large project and then tailor the communication and engagement process so that it is appropriate to that local population,” says Bacon.

A review of the existing change management tools found that, whilst useful diagnostically for issue management and

related tasks, they weren’t highlighting people issues – what was required to align change with employees’ concerns. The Kaisen ‘toolkit’ was chosen as it not only strips away the ‘bureaucracy’ of change so that companies can get a clear picture of the effect of change on those involved, but it is also flexible enough for change controllers and line managers to be able to tailor it to specific issues and control the programme.

“an emotional response to change”

Kaisen’s Aurea Fellows explains: *“We started by focusing on the psychology of change; what management needs to do throughout the course of the change process to ensure that people are genuinely engaged and that their emotional response to change is managed appropriately. All participants were given the toolkit which could be introduced into their role as designated change facilitators.”*



“This two-day workshop was augmented by a four-day ‘Train the Trainers’ (TTT) programme so that selected internal trainers could, in turn, run employee engagement workshops for UB line managers engaged in critical change projects. The line managers are the ones responsible for making change happen and, thus, must have the necessary skills to understand employee engagement issues.”

Ultimately the TTT programmes will enable all of UB’s line managers to acquire the appropriate skills, and similar programmes will be introduced for senior directors and stakeholders to enable them to recognise their role in leading change. Bacon adds: *“We realised that if we’d started with senior management, we wouldn’t have been able to achieve instant results because the programme would have taken too long to permeate the business.”*

Skill checks completed by participants in the workshop and TTT programme showed a 92% increase in confidence to minimise resistance to change and a 69% increase in the ability to make people truly motivated about change. Managers and HR business partners are now well-equipped to ensure that everyone is united in change.

For further information:

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